



[Lorenzo di Piero De' Medici](#)

The Prince

Like the communists of today, [Niccolò Machiavelli](#) cultivated “long experience in contemporary affairs and a continual study of antiquity”. Both Machiavelli and Marx were familiar with the politics of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as in “contemporary affairs”.

Machiavelli’s “Prince” was written over 500 years ago, in Florence, Italy, and published in 1512. According to Karl Marx, the sixteenth century (1501-1600) was when capitalism first arose on the earth, especially in the Netherlands and in England, but it was Italy that had the most developed political culture at that time.

Hence [“The Prince”](#) appeared much earlier than the first writings on Political Economy such as those by [Thomas Hobbes](#), [William Petty](#) and [Nicholas Barbon](#), which appeared between 1650 and 1700. Karl Marx was familiar with all of these, and Machiavelli’s work in particular has been foundational for politicians and for political thought during the five centuries of its existence.

[Machiavelli](#) was needing employment when he wrote this user-friendly text for the 20-year-old Florentine prince [Lorenzo di Piero De' Medici](#) (pictured above), in the hope that the young man would give Machiavelli a job as a consultant, *consigliero*, or something of that sort. No job resulted for Machiavelli, but what he left us as a result of this attempt was a set of “short texts” of very frank and still-useful political education, not very different in conception from a Communist University “[Generic Course](#)”.

The chapter, in the attached selection of four, that corresponds most closely to the politics of today is Chapter IX, “Concerning a Civil Principality”. All of them are very interesting and all contain advice that is still good after 500 years. Our discussion should be about this advice. If people have not read the material in advance, one chapter could be selected and read out loud. The chapters are very short, but powerful.

Machiavelli had a good basic understanding of class politics, which is perhaps why his works were put on the Pope’s *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (Index of Forbidden Books) not long after his death – thereby quickly guaranteeing their eternal fame.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Four selected parts from The Prince, by Machiavelli](#).
- A PDF file of the reading text is attached
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).